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WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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Mideast

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Key stories in the media:  
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Leading media reported that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is due here this evening for a two-day visit to Israel and the PA. Ha'aretz says that the visit is aimed at demonstrating America's involvement on the eve of disengagement and strengthening efforts at coordination between Israel and the PA. The media reported that for the first time, Secretary Rice will visit PM Sharon at his Sycamore Ranch home tomorrow. She will confer with FM Silvan Shalom tonight, with Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz on Friday, and with Vice Premier Shimon Peres on Sunday morning. Ha'aretz reported that on Wednesday, Deputy National Security Advisor Elliott Abrams and A/S David Welch arrived in Jerusalem to prepare for the visit. Ha'aretz writes that officials in Washington had raised the possibility that Rice would try to arrange a meeting between Sharon and PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas, but that the idea was coolly received in Jerusalem. The newspaper says that Sharon made it clear he would meet Abbas only after the pullout was completed, and that the Americans have now dropped the subject.

All media reported that thousands of anti-disengagement activists reluctantly headed home last night after being prevented from marching toward Gush Katif. Israel Radio cited a police assessment that this morning, 1,500 people were staying behind in Kfar Maimon, where the march stopped. Ha'aretz quoted IDF sources as saying that right-wing activists are slipping into Gush Katif while the army's attention is focused on Kfar Maimon.

A spokeswoman for USAID was quoted as saying Wednesday, in an interview with Jerusalem Post, that the USG is willing to pay some USD 8 to 10 million to buy the Gaza settlers' hothouses and give them to the Palestinians to save the jobs of some 4,000 Palestinians who work there. Jerusalem Post quoted Sharon spokesman Raanan Gissin as saying that Sharon supports the pending sale, which is being brokered by Peres. The newspaper writes that Peres has been working on the sale in advance of Secretary Rice's arrival to the country. According to

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Jerusalem Post, Gissin added that no formal government approval was needed. Hamodi'a reported that on Wednesday, Peres mentioned the understanding to a Sharon-headed ministerial committee dealing with disengagement. Speaking on Israel Radio this morning, Agriculture Minister Yisrael Katz (Likud) attacked Peres for defending the Palestinians' interests, rather than Israel's.

All media reported that the opponents of the disengagement plan sustained what Ha'aretz dubs a "bitter defeat" on Wednesday, when three attempts to delay the disengagement from Gaza by several months failed by a large majority. Those bill proposals were all rejected, 69-43, 69-41, and 69-40. Ha'aretz reported that Sharon declined to comment on Finance Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's absence from the votes. Jerusalem Post reported that Sharon decided not to fire Netanyahu over the issue.

All media reported that IDF Chief of Staff Dan Halutz approved a series of steps this week to harshen disciplinary measures against refuseniks ahead of the

disengagement plan. Halutz said that a soldier convicted of refusing an order would no longer be allowed to serve as a combat soldier, and that refuseniks would be sentenced to prison.

Ha'aretz reported that the Palestinian government has allocated USD 10 million for connecting the settlements that are due to be evacuated in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and the areas surrounding them, to the PA's energy and transportation infrastructures.

PA Civil Affairs Minister Muhammad Dahlan was quoted as saying this week, in an interview with Ha'aretz, that Hamas is trying to carry out a military coup against the PA. He was also quoted as saying that Sharon and Hamas have the same goal: destroying the PA. Maariv reported that a popular army comprised of thousands of Hamas activists ("Murabitun") is poised to conquer the Gaza Strip and to overthrow the PA after the disengagement. Leading media reported that Fatah and Hamas clashed on Wednesday, despite the agreement reached between the groups on Tuesday.

Leading media reported that two settlers are suspected of having stabbed to death a 13-year-old Palestinian boy near the settlement of Shilo Wednesday. However, the Ha'aretz web site and other media later reported that senior Palestinian figures told IDF officials that the boy was likely murdered within the context of a clan feud.

Jerusalem Post cited the results of a Tel Aviv University poll conducted earlier this week:  
-75 percent of Israelis surveyed said they believed the disengagement would take place.  
-57 percent of the public thought that "in retrospect" Israel should not have established any settlements in Gaza, while only 37 percent agreed that it was necessary to do so.

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Mideast:  
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#### Summary:

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Columnist Ari Shavit wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "[The pro-disengagement] camp must give the disengagement valid significance.... [The anti-disengagement] camp must overcome its sense of mourning and realize that the die is cast."

Veteran journalist Yaron London wrote in the editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "The process is familiar from other countries that established colonies. The clearest example is 'French Algeria,' which tried to bring about the collapse of the republic."

Editor-in-Chief Gonen Ginat wrote on page one of nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe: "Nothing can be expected from a corrupt dictator who sold his country in order to dodge an indictment."

Ultra-Orthodox Yated Ne'eman editorialized: "The White House, which views itself, and justly so, as the sponsor of the diplomatic processes in the region, is incapable of helping either Sharon or Abu Mazen in this situation."

#### Block Quotes:

##### I. "Blue and Orange at the Red Line"

Columnist Ari Shavit wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (July 21): "The Prime Minister has not yet bothered to explain which profound insight lies at the basis of the disengagement plan.... There are a mere few weeks left. The [pro-disengagement] blue camp must come to its senses. It must grant a humane and moral dimension to the historic move; it must give the disengagement valid significance. It must look in the eye those whose world it is about to destroy and speak to them. The [anti-disengagement] orange camp too must come to its senses. It must overcome its sense of mourning and realize that the die is cast. There will indeed be disengagement. The orange camp must now curb the rebellion, revolt, and refusal spreading among its grieving members. It must ensure that the inevitable division of the Land of Israel [Israel, including the territories] will not tear asunder the people of Israel and will not shake the State of Israel. Under no circumstances must the orange camp cross the red line."

##### II. "The State of Judea, Samaria and Gaza"

Veteran journalist Yaron London wrote in the editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (July 21): "The settler leaders in the territories speak to the authorities as though they were the representatives of a foreign state. In their rogue state live a people that has developed its own laws and separated from the hegemonic state in its ways of life and beliefs.... Before our eyes, the old warning of the opponents of occupation is coming true, i.e. that the settlers' state would gain strength and when put to the test would rebel against the State of Israel. This was to be expected, since the process is familiar from other countries that established colonies. The clearest example is 'French Algeria,' which tried to bring about the collapse of the republic. All the warnings against rash comparisons between what happened in France 50 years ago and what is happening in our home are shattering in the face of the sights in southern Israel.... Like [the colonists in Algeria], the settlers say that instead of compromising with the Muslims, we should 'let the army win,' and like them, 'extremists' in the rebel camp plot to attack Muslims so that all of the national energy will be dedicated to defense against an all-out attack.... And as in France in the mid-20th century, here too: The excited calls for national unity and national responsibility should be accompanied by a demonstration of the state's power."

### III. "The Dictator Who Quashed Democracy Is to Blame For the Violence"

Editor-in-Chief Gonen Ginat wrote on page one of nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe (July 21): "Should, God forbid, violent clashes occur [among Israelis], someone would be responsible for them. It is a reckless dictator who spat on the voters. Ariel Sharon is the culprit -- not the only one, but the main one. If there is violence, it will be the direct consequence of that spit on democracy. It is inevitable to recall the following: there were democratic elections in Israel; in those elections, the public clearly and unequivocally decided against the current direction.... A person who quashes democracy begets violence. Had Sharon been a responsible human being -- and he is neither a human being nor someone responsible -- he would have said that he changed his mind: let's try elections or a referendum.... Nothing can be expected from a corrupt dictator who sold his country in order to dodge an indictment."

### IV. "The Threshold of Washington's Mediating Ability"

Ultra-Orthodox Yated Ne'eman editorialized (July 21): "The situation [in this region] isn't totally under control -- on either of the sides. While Sharon is acting under the increasing sense of an internal rift, the Palestinian Authority is finding it hard to control Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The White House, which views itself, and justly so, as the sponsor of the diplomatic processes in the region, is incapable of helping either Sharon or Abu Mazen in this situation. The tension in the air and the feeling of uncertainty, which have turned into key features of the Middle East, no longer are only the consequence of conflicts between neighboring nations, but also of discords within regimes. Washington now feels that even a regional peace conference would be considered a plan that could be easier to implement than an intra-Israeli mediation between Sharon and the Yesha Council of Jewish Settlements in the Territories and his opponents with in the Likud, or, in a totally different context, between the warring factions in the PA."

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